

HOUSTON

MODERN LUXURY

OUT ENING!

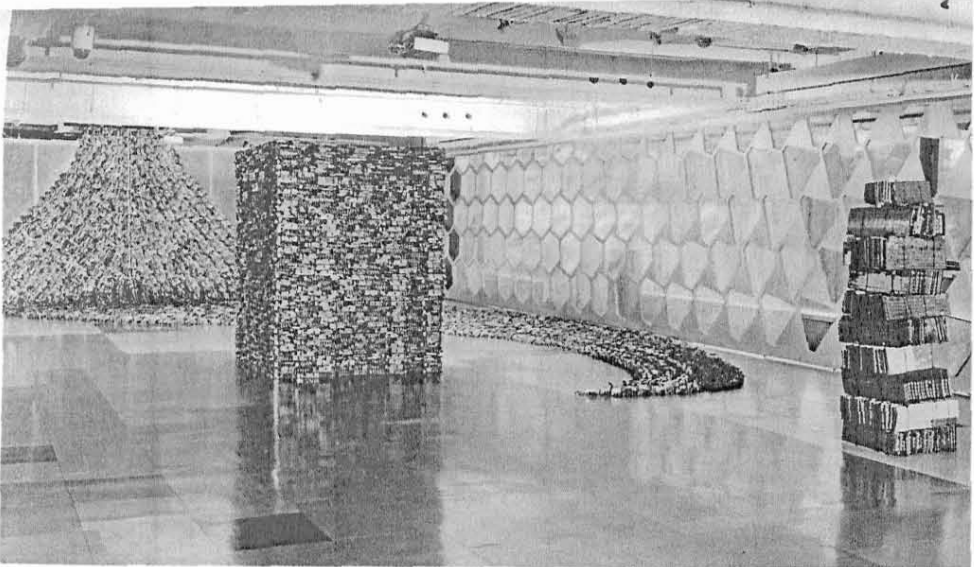
List, Liquored Up!
er Dives, Posh Pubs
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Rocking With Blackie
the Best Bashes!



The Nightlife Issue



BUTT IN Runnels, just above, has made pieces, such as a flag, with cigarettes. And, far above, Art League's 'Ecologies' employs old computers.

...CONTINUED Runnels means the effort as an anti-smoking crusade. The artist grew up in a house with smoking parents and describes with no small amount of disgust the film of nicotine that covers the home, car and clothes of smokers. "It's The Way Some People Live," is one of his trademark soapbox rants—and also the title of his series. He's finishing up "Nicotine Lovers," a quilt with two pillows, one made of Marlboros and the other of Virginia Slims ("his and hers," he says). For eight years—"I have a very long gestation process"—Runnels hunted for the perfect headboard and footboard for the bed, and finally located it at Montrose thrift store **The Guild**

Shop (2009 Dunlavy St., 713.528.5095). "They're so glorious in themselves," he says of the iron pieces. "They almost have a curvaceous sense of smoke."

The bed will complete an entire furniture suite made of butts. There's also a U.S. flag titled "The Ignited States of America," a pair of "smoking chairs," a "Light Up My Life" lamp and Venetian blinds. "It's really repulsive to do," he says. "I call them obscenely beautiful."

Runnels has asked bartenders to collect debris from ashtrays and also posted a note on his website: "Please save your butts for me." He sometimes gets anonymous donations from smokers on the front stoop of the studio, and friends often write him notes on the butts, knowing he handles each one individually. For depth in his pieces, he sometimes uses butts covered in lipstick. "Finding beauty in horror," he says.

Now that his 20-year obsession with butts is nearly behind him, what medium will be his next message? "I believe the cell-phoners are the new smokers," says the artist. "They are invading and contaminating our oral space."

Across town at the **Art League of Houston** (1953 Montrose Blvd., 713.523.9530), an exhibit running through June 19 is already making art of discarded 21st-century devices, with a show by British sculptor **Susan Stockwell** called *Vulnerable Ecologies*. Exhibitions Coordinator Sarah Schellenberg says an "army of volunteers" answered the call to help assemble the on-site installation, a ground-breaking show using computer parts the League is touting as "an autopsy of our consumer society."

In anticipation of the artist's arrival, Schellenberg began cold-calling area recyclers and got an immediate response from an outfit called **TechnoCycle**. The company delivered recyclable cables, power supplies and other computer components from its warehouse. When Stockwell landed

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SECOND-HAND HIP
The glasses at new Anvil bar come from estate sales, and the foot rest is made of a section of railroad track first used on a route from Houston to Eagle Lake.



Flip the Bird!

STAGE RIGHT
Houston Ballet's revival of the re-imagined 'Swan'

In 2006 the **Houston Ballet** drew in flocks of culture vultures with Artistic Director Stanton Welch's big-budget, contemporary-feeling remake of the über-classic *Swan Lake*. The company restages the show June 11-21 at the Wortham Center (501 Texas Ave., 713.227.2787), making beautiful use of the sets and pre-Raphaelite-painting-inspired costumes that now-deceased New Zealand designer Kristian Fredrickson collaborated with Welch to devise.

Production director Tom Boyd says that such short-term revivals are fairly common in the ballet world. "It was a brand-new production, newly conceived [in 2006]," he says. "One viewing just doesn't give it its due, I would say." All the key production elements will be recycled—including the dragon-like monster Rothbart, which took more than 600 hours to create. But technicians will log countless more hours re-fitting and re-designing, striving to make this performance "bigger and better," says Boyd.

"The creative process keeps going," he adds. "We're anxious to see it again. I hope our audience is, too!" —**AB**

...THE LOOP TRENDS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46. in Houston three weeks before the show's opening, she was "overwhelmed" with the amount of supplies available for her use, Schellenberg says. The circuit boards, whose insides have a golden-like quality, were deemed especially gorgeous.

"We use these things everyday—they're all around us," Stockwell says. "We don't really think about where they come from and where they go to. I'm pulling them apart and finding they're full of precious metals, and toxins, too." The artist showcases a massive U.S. map made of keyboards, awe-inspiring architectural towers of industrial components, and another configuration made of power supplies, whose exposed wires appear to be crawling out of the wall-bound structure.

In another first this summer for Houston arties, Brooklyn-based artist **Leonardo Drew's** first U.S. career survey takes place at U of H's **Blaffer Gallery** through Aug. 1. Titled *Existed*, the collection includes 14 major sculptures that date back to the early 1990s, when the artist created assemblages of everyday castoffs. "They don't look like haphazard collage," assures Blaffer's Jeffrey S. Bowen. "The way Drew cakes the individual found objects with rust makes them look more like a part of a painting than separate objects."

The aesthetic of re-use has even made its way to Houston's nightlife scene, where chic bars are using antique furnishings and discarded materials to invoke bygone days of classic cocktail.

Vintage 46 (2418 Sunset Blvd., 713.524.6318)—its name evocative of the decade its owners draw inspiration from—will soon open near Rice Village. (For more on Vintage 46, see the "Make the Scene" feature.) Tucked near a row of bungalows-turned-retail-spaces on Sunset Boulevard, the small wine bar has made use of arm chairs and benches rescued from the famously demolished Shamrock Hotel, a Downtown icon synonymous with high balls and post-prohibition partying. Owner Tom Brown describes the interior feel as something from Howard Hughes' time. There are tables repurposed from other defunct establishments, and the brick behind the bar and the metal bar-top were also salvaged. It all adds to an atmosphere the oenophile owner hopes is reminiscent of the "glamorous era."

Meanwhile, the new **Anvil Bar & Refuge** (1424 Westheimer Rd., 713.523.1622) kept its Montrose neighbors salivating for months as its owners renovated their corner spot on the Westheimer Curve. (For more on Anvil, see the "Make the Scene" feature.) Childhood best friends Bobby Heugel and Kevin Floyd fulfilled a dream when they partnered with Justin Burrow, each bringing impressive bar and restaurant experience to the project born of a passionate approach to mixology.

Along with 100-proof rye whiskey and other hard-to-find spirits, Anvil stocks liquors that haven't been available in Texas since 1910, such as Crème de Violette, a brandy imported from Germany. "Our cocktails are spirit-forward, with fresh ingredients," Heugel says. "They're stirred when they should be, poured on the right type of ice in appropriate glassware. The way the drinks were intended to be made."

Before opening in April, the group searched for environmental pieces they felt were essential to realizing their vision. Restroom doors are fashioned from old walk-in coolers from Gonzalez, Texas. They crafted butcher-block-style tables from antique wood floors, and created bar shelving from vintage Chardonnay stomping bins. Hipsters sip drinks on weathered stools and rest their boots on a 48-foot section of railroad track originally used on a route from Houston to Eagle Lake. As evidence, two date stamps show the pieces were forged in 1950 and 1952.

The list goes on. A wine loft is made from old pallets that were used to store pianos in a store where Heugel and Floyd worked together as kids. Most impressive, the collection of glassware all dates before the 1960s and was collected at Montrose thrift stores and antique shops over a period of months. "We want you to touch things and experience things that ask you to go back to another era and to embrace something older," the soft-spoken Heugel explains, echoing the sentiment of so many of Houston's hippest

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